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LETTER DATED 5 JUNE 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to attach the following two documents concerning the conflict between the State of Eritrea and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Asmara today, 5 June 1998:

1. Statement of the Government of Eritrea on the facilitation process;

2. Press release on Ethiopia's air attack on the southern outskirts of Asmara, the capital of Eritrea.

I should be grateful if you would kindly circulate the present letter and its annexes as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haile MENKERIOS
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex I

Statement on the facilitation process issued by the Government of Eritrea on 5 June 1998

At the initiative of the Government of Eritrea, as expressed in the statement of the Cabinet of Ministers of 14 May 1998, a facilitation process has been under way since the eruption of the crisis between Eritrea and Ethiopia. The Governments of the United States of America and Rwanda, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Chairman of the Sahelo-Saharan Organization as well as the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity have all contributed to this constructive facilitation process. A number of other African Heads of State and leaders from around the world have also encouraged the efforts for a peaceful settlement.

All during this process, the Government of Eritrea has been consistently endeavouring to ensure that the facilitation process will address the core issues that would bring about a durable, legal and peaceful solution to the crisis, as well as provide for a reliable framework for defusing the tension along the borders that could ignite an unnecessary conflagration.

In this context and along with the proposal forwarded by the Cabinet of Ministers on 14 May 1998, the Government of Eritrea has been consistently calling for:

(a) The recognition of and adherence to the colonial borders;

(b) The demarcation of the boundary between the two countries through the involvement of the United Nations Cartographic Unit;

(c) The demilitarization of the entire border, to be monitored through an observer team acceptable to both sides.

The Government of Eritrea has further underlined to the facilitators that, in its view, the question of the temporary administration of the civilian centres in the demilitarized areas could be handled with the necessary flexibility in the interim period as the jurisdiction of the sovereign State would be reinstated as soon as the demarcation of the boundary on the basis of the established colonial treaties is completed.

The four-point recommendations that have evolved in the facilitation process address the paramount issues that the Government of Eritrea has been raising and are, therefore, not controversial at all to the Government of Eritrea. At the same time, the Government of Eritrea believes that the facilitation process has not been consummated and that there are still serious issues of detail and implementation that need to be worked out in the period ahead.

While the facilitation process has gone a long way in creating grounds for a non-violent and legal solution, the Government of Ethiopia, which has stated

its acceptance of the recommendations, is still bent on an all-out war. The Government of Ethiopia stated yesterday that "Ethiopia's armed forces had been given orders today to take all necessary measures to repulse Eritrea's aggression". Moreover, the Government of Ethiopia has called for a general mobilization, stating that "all Ethiopians should follow the directives that will be issued by the country's armed forces". Consistent with this policy of belligerence, the Government of Ethiopia has ordered the closure of the Eritrean consulates in the country and a reduction of the Eritrean Embassy in Addis Ababa to a mere staff of three.

The Government of Eritrea reiterates its firm commitment to a peaceful resolution of the crisis. However, it underlines that it will never acquiesce to the language of force and intimidation and will, if necessary, resolutely defend its hard-won right to live in peace and freedom. Ethiopia must realize that its recourse to force in the past few weeks has been fruitless in the past and will prove the same in the future.

Annex II

Press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Eritrea on 5 June 1998

In line with its persistent attempts to escalate the current border dispute and consistent with its warning of yesterday, 4 June 1998, which stated that its defence forces will "take all the necessary measures" against Eritrea, Ethiopia has today, 5 June 1998, committed another blatant aggression against Eritrea.

Today at 1400 hours local time, two Ethiopian Air Force fighter planes bombed the southern outskirts of Asmara.

Again, at around 1430 hours, two more fighter planes dropped more bombs in the same locality.

No information is available at this stage on damage to property or persons.